



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF FISHERY COORDINATOR FOR WAR

For Immediate Release

OWI-1393

Alaska's \$40,000,000-a-year salmon canning industry, which accounts for about 80 percent of the Nation's supply of this vital seafood, today became subject to a unique concentration scheme to help it meet problems of manpower and equipment shortages created by the war.

An order by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, who is also Fisheries Coordinator, will concentrate the canning of this year's catch of Alaska salmon in 74 of the largest and most modern plants rather than in the 120 previously used. Secretary Ickes, by virtue of a directive of Food Administrator Wickard, has complete responsibility for those portions of the war food program concerned with the catching and processing of fish.

The order was made necessary by the fact that the armed forces have taken over a large percentage of the tenders and power scows used by the industry in Alaskan waters and also because it is expected that no more than 50 or 60 percent of the normal supply of labor will be available in 1943.

Normally some 350 tenders and power scows are employed in the installation and operation of fishing apparatus and for the transportation of fish to the canneries. Nearly half of these are no longer available for this work.

Customarily more than 20,000 persons are employed for a period of from four to seven months by the Alaskan salmon industry. More than half of these have been recruited in the Pacific Coast states, the balance being drawn from Alaskan residents. Other war work, the draft, and transportation difficulties have materially reduced the labor supply.

The greater efficiency of the Alaskan salmon industry as a result of the concentration order is expected to increase the pack this year from the 5,300,000 cases last year to 5,500,000 cases in 1943.

The concentration plan is expected to make possible:

1. A reduction in manpower requirements by 5,030 persons
2. Reduction in northbound passenger accommodations by 3,933 persons
3. Reduction in northbound tonnage by 17,724 tons

(over)

4. Reduction in required floating equipment by 86 tenders and 50 scows
5. Reduction in fishing apparatus by 48 traps, 25 purse seiners, and 67,130 fathoms of gill nets

Last year the industry's 120 canneries used 226 lines of canning machinery; this year the 74 canneries which will operate will use only 131 lines with maximum use of the high-speed machines.

Canners have been advised to make early commitments for labor, supplies, and transportation so that the season, beginning in May, can get off to a good start.

Although the Alaskan pack is expected to increase this year, not much of it will go to civilians in the United States. Last year 60 percent of the pack went to the armed forces and our allies, and the demand for these sources may be greater this year.

Seafood production as a whole may continue its downward trend this year due to wartime restrictions and manpower shortages. Food Administrator Wickard has asked for a catch of seven billion pounds in 1943, but Coordinator Ickes was informed by the industry last week that it expected a production of only three billion, six hundred and fifty million pounds unless some of the industry's handicaps were removed. The industry probably produces more food per manhour and per dollar of invested capital than any other element in the Nation's food business.

Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Deputy Coordinator of Fisheries, announced that Ralph Ferrandini has been named field administrator of the new concentration order and will maintain headquarters in Seattle.